

## United States Senate

COMMITTEES
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION & FORESTRY
COMMERCE, SCIENCE & TRANSPORTATION
FINANCE

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November 26, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow Chairwoman Senate Agriculture Committee 328 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank D. Lucas Chairman House Committee on Agriculture 1301 Longworth House Office Building Building Washington, DC 20515 The Honorable Thad Cochran Ranking Member Senate Agriculture Committee 328 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson Ranking Member House Committee on Agriculture 1301 Longworth House Office

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman, Ranking Members and Farm Bill Conferees:

Another long-term extension of the 2008 Farm Bill should *not* be considered by the Farm Bill Conference Committee as an alternative to reaching an agreement and completing work on the 2013 Farm Bill for final passage – no matter how difficult it may be to settle differences on the Commodity, Food and Nutrition, and Dairy Titles.

An unfinished Farm Bill will continue the highly uncertain future for agriculture producers, agrelated businesses, consumers, rural economies, and the stewardship of our land and water brought about by last year's one-year extension. Failure to conference the Farm Bills passed by the full House and Senate by late this year or early next year simply cannot be an option for consideration by Farm Bill conferees. In addition to providing much-needed certainty, completion of the Farm Bill can be expected to provide from \$20 to \$40 billion in savings, which would reduce our nation's deficit over the next several years.

Agreement on even a basic framework for the Commodity Title appears to be elusive to conferees. As a next step, I strongly urge you to reach agreement on basic core Commodity Title program provisions that are not only effective for the agriculture producers, but also are defensible to taxpayers and our global trading partners.

A broad range of agriculture and non-agriculture organizations as well as a growing bipartisan contingency of Senators and Representatives have expressed deep concerns over the previously authorized and failed Commodity Title policy of linking planted acres to high fixed target prices as a means to calculate assistance. This one policy has garnered more well-defined criticism than any others in the Commodity Title. Creating an effective safety net after removing this

outdated provision from the Commodity Title appears to be the only logical path forward for reaching agreement on this section of the Farm Bill.

Many of my Agriculture Committee colleagues on the Conference Committee have proven records spanning multiple Farm Bills and decades of experience overcoming geographical and specific crop differences in drafting agriculture policy. I am highly confident that by removing the planted acre/high fixed target price provision and focusing on one goal of finalizing this Farm Bill, the current conferees could bring this Farm Bill conference to a successful conclusion.

Ranchers in my home state continue to cope with the challenges left in the wake of a historic early blizzard without the much-needed assistance from expired livestock disaster programs. Conservation programs vital to the continuation of land stewardship practices that protect soil and water have also expired. And with each passing day without a Farm Bill, crop insurance, which is the most important safety net tool available, is increasingly targeted with proposed changes detrimental to agriculture by those who do not understand its importance to sustaining a safe and secure food supply.

Agriculture, and the food, fiber, and energy it produces, is too vital to America's future to be jeopardized by failure to once again pass a Farm Bill. I urge you to focus on reporting a defensible, effective Farm Bill that will provide certainty to the agriculture industry and the people in this country and the world who depend on a new multi-year Farm Bill that brings agriculture policy into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Thank you very much for your efforts, and I look forward to a successfully negotiated Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

United States Senate

CC: Farm Bill Conferees